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Another Opening, Another Showcase For the Right

ELSA DIXLER

There they go again. On December 7, the Heritage Foundation, a major New Right think tank, released its latest report, *Mandate for Leadership II: Continuing the Conservative Revolution*. The first *Mandate for Leadership* was touted as a "blueprint for conservative government" when it appeared just days after the 1980 election. Filled with recommendations for trimming down government bureaucracy and beefing up defense, *Mandate* was the most detailed transition plan ever prepared by a group not officially associated with an incoming President. Transition team director Edwin Meese 3d, who had worked behind the scenes with Heritage president Edwin J. Feulner Jr. for a year, accepted a copy on the evening news, and a 1,093-page paperback edition of the twenty-volume report made *The Washington Post's* best-seller list for three weeks in early 1981.

A comforting bit of liberal wisdom holds that the influence of the right in the Reagan Administration is less than meets the eye. Reagan makes gestures in its direction—supporting constitutional amendments that have no chance of passage, sending a right-to-lifer to a world population conference—but pragmatic Republican bureaucrats and members of Congress, as well as the White House staff, hold the reins. Yet in March 1982 Feulner claimed that the Reagan Administration had adopted 61 percent of *Mandate's* recommendations. For all the talk about the Rev. Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority, the Heritage Foundation is probably the single most important outside influence on this Administration—and given the constant flow of its personnel into government, a most important inside one as well.

There are those who insist that Heritage has inflated its clout by taking credit for legislative achievements that would have happened anyway. After all, the Administration and the foundation share many assumptions and goals. Surely social service programs would have been cut without the foundation's urging.

While that is true, the relationship between the Administration and the foundation has been so incestuous that it is

hard to tell whose policy is whose. Nowhere was that more apparent than in the intelligence section of the first *Mandate*. As Jay Peterzell of the Center for National Security Studies observed, "Every one of its major proposals is a restatement of policy papers and legislation produced by Reagan supporters over the last year and a half" [see Peterzell, "Unleashing the Dogs of McCarthyism," *The Nation*, January 17, 1981].

Among the recommendations in that section that have found their way into current law and policy, either wholly or in part, whether by executive order or legislative enactment, are the exemption of certain Central Intelligence Agency files from the Freedom of Information Act, revision of Justice Department guidelines to permit surveillance of radical groups that have committed no overt criminal acts, stepped-up domestic bugging and wiretapping, increased funding for C.I.A. covert action and "the restoration of some Congressional body with similar functions" to the old House Un-American Activities Committee, a role the Senate's Security and Terrorism Subcommittee has been playing in a desultory way.

To be sure, the Heritage Foundation preserves its conservative purity by criticizing Administration shortcomings—sort of. Its report *The First Year*, published in 1982, blamed "the Administration's failure to accomplish more" on "personnel." *Mandate II* also has some harsh words for the Reagan team. "Those charged with transportation policy had no vision of a defederalized, market-oriented transportation policy," it says. "The Reagan Administration failed to develop a comprehensive plan for what it wanted to accomplish in agricultural policy and food assistance reform."

The Administration relies so heavily on the *Mandates* partly because of their clarity and thoroughness. The latest one is just under 600 pages long and contains approximately 1,300 specific proposals for the short and the long term. It examines the functioning of each of the Cabinet departments, as well as Social Security, the budget process, the intelligence community and a number of defense and foreign policy issues. Underlying it all is a firm belief in free markets and an obsession with the Communist threat. That focus doesn't blur for an instant.

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